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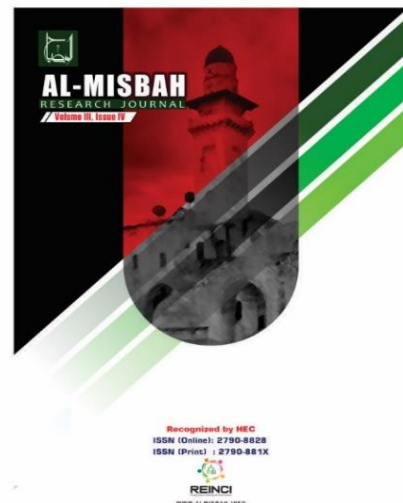
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FIASCO**

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*Amir Nadeem

ABSTRACT

The present study will discuss the long-standing dispute of Palestine and Israel. This paper reveals the genesis of conflict between the Arab states and the then non-existing state of Israel. The state of Israel was created in 1948 under the tutelage of the Western powers in general and the United States in particular. Furthermore, this work highlights the reaction of the Arab states towards solving this issue. In addition to the Arab states, ideological and geographical organizations i.e. the OIC and the Arab League, have worked for the resolution of this conflict but could not achieve the desired objective i.e. a free and independent homeland for Palestinians. Nature of this conflict is so volatile that it resulted into three full scale wars among the stakeholders with huge cost of lives and resources. Therefore, it is significant for Arab world to make concerted efforts to manage this conflict.

Key Words: Palestine-Israel Conflict, Arab States, The Arab League, The OIC, Western Responsibility.

Introduction:

To live and move freely is the innate wish of any human being on this planet, but it is not necessary that his wish is to be materialized everywhere. Rather in some parts of the world, we observe that man is struggling to liberate himself. The present case is also one of them. The struggle of Palestinians to get a homeland for them commenced seven decades ago in 1947 under the patronage of the United Nations. It is worthy to highlight that in the aftermath of the World War II, German's ally the Ottoman Empire was dismantled by the allied powers and the Palestinian land came under the control of the British.¹ The Jews migrated into the Middle East and voiced for separate homeland in Palestine under the Balfour Declaration. During the 1920s, only 23% of the Jews settled in Palestine but in the aftermath of World War II, that number rose to 38%. The settlement of Jews in Palestine got its legitimacy through the United Nations' resolution 181. The said resolution recognized land of Palestine as homeland for Jews and thus supported the creation of Israel in 1948. United Nations' Resolution 181 segregated that land into three parts i.e. one for Jews, one for

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Muslims and the last one comprising of Jerusalem under the observation of the United Nations.² At the end of World War II, Arab countries along with Palestine laid foundation of the Arab League with the objective to *"improve coordination amongst its member states on the issues of common interest"*. It further agreed to promote trade and to bring about economic and social welfare. It is also interesting to note that the British promised to extend cooperation for pan-Arab unity.³

However, the Arab League could not achieve the targets due to its internal rifts and differences in realm of ideology, politics and customs. It is equally significant to assert here that another influential pan-Islamic organization popularly known as Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) could not meet with the expected outcomes. The struggle of Palestinians is long standing, unflinching and invincible whereas support of Muslim countries in general and neighboring countries in particular is not so encouraging. Even the organizations like the Arab League and the OIC have no clear-cut road map for resolution of Palestine Israel conflict and to bring solace to the Palestinians rather uncertainty and indecisive prevails in their conduct. A careful study of these organizations reveals that especially the Arab League, since its foundation in 1945, remained in the hands of one country i.e. Egypt. The league is divided even on the issue.⁴ At the end, suggestions will be given to make the roles of the OIC, the Arab League and the Arab states for resolution of Palestine-Israel conflict effective by overcoming social, political, economic and cultural obstacles.

Genesis of Palestine-Israel Conflict:

The genesis of conflict arising out of the land of Palestine can be traced back to thousands of years. The land of Palestine holds a sacred place in all the divine religions of the world i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Proponents of the said religions put forward primacy of their claim to the land of Palestine, this territorial claim along with other political, social and cultural factors have contributed to the evolution of conflict over the land of Palestine.⁵

Brief history of the Jews Kingdom

The history of the Jews in the land of Palestine is the oldest among the other religions. It represents the glorious days of Jewish Kingdom that was established in the land of Palestine around 1010 years before the birth of Christ during the reign of King David (1010-970 B.C.). Thereafter, King David's son King Solomon built the first Jewish Temple. It is called the first temple because it was later on destroyed. After the demise of King Solomon, the Jewish

ROLE OF ARAB STATES, THE ARAB LEAGUE AND THE OIC IN THE PALESTINE-ISRAEL DISPUTE: A COMPLETE FIASCO

temple was divided into fissures i.e. one was known as Israel and the other as Judah. Then around the period of 721-715 B.C., the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians, an extremely strong military dynasty. Before that destruction, there were twelve Jewish tribes, out of which only two survived the barbarianism of the Assyrians and were sent in exile. The other ten tribes were lost in history. Thereafter, the Kingdom of Judah was also destroyed by the Babylonians in 585 B.C. The Jews of Judah were also sent into exile. The temple of Solomon was destroyed. The Jews found some respite with the advent of Cyrus, a Persian King who was the founder of the Achaemenid Dynasty. That dynasty was considered as the first superpower of the world. After defeating the Babylonians, Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to the land of Palestine but due to their tumultuous past, only 40,000 Jews took the offer and returned to the land of Palestine. Then, they built the second temple. Further down the line, around 63 A.D., Palestine was conquered by the Roman Empire and Jews began to revolt against the Romans. The last of these revolts came in the year 132 A.D, the last revolt 132-135 A.D. was crushed by the Romans they also destroyed the second temple. The Jews were again expelled from Palestine and this started the migration of the Jews around the world and the Jews called this second exile “diaspora”.⁶

The Zionist Ideology

The Zionist movement was founded in 1897 by a Jew journalist named Theodor Herzl who came from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Initially, he was not a religious person rather he was only interested secular Jewish affairs. His approach changed after he he covered a trial in France, a very famous trial which highlighted the discrimination prevailing against the Jews. As a result of covering that trial and discovering the reality that Jews were being discriminated against, he was converted to the cause of Zionism. He became an active Jew, devoted himself to the Jewish affairs in religious as well as political sense. In his pursuit of homeland for the Jews, he met with the Sultan of Turkey Sultan Abdul Hameed II. He made him a proposition that the rich Jews would provide money to Turkey and in return Ottoman Empire would allow the Jews to go to Palestine and turn Palestine into a Jewish state. The meeting ended in a disaster as the offer was rejected by Sultan Abdul Hameed II. After his disappointed endeavor with the Sultan, creation of the state of Israel seemed to be a far-fetched idea.⁷

Defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I and the Balfour Declaration

The fortunes of the Jewish Zionist movement turned around with the start of the First World War where the Ottoman Empire was the partner of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a part of the Central Alliance and fought against the Entente Powers i.e. Britain, France, Russia, Italy, and later on the United States. The Ottoman Empire lost the war and also the empire collapsed. During the First World War, the British conquered the land of Palestine in December 1917. On 2 November 1917, just one month before conquering the land, the British issued a notorious declaration *“The Balfour Declaration”* named after the British Secretary of State Arthur James Balfour. Actually, it was a letter by Arthur James Balfour to a very strong Jewish celebrity i.e. Lord Rothschild. It was also considered as a charter for the settlement of Jews in the land of Palestine as it opened the door of Palestine to the Jews to come there and establish their homeland.⁸ It is worth mentioning here that what the Zionism Founder Theodor Herzl did not achieve in the past was gifted to the Jews by a western power i.e. the Great Britain. As a result of the Balfour Declaration, a large number of Jews came to Palestine in 1930s owing to economic woes growing anti-Jews sentiments in Europe.

The Arabs chosen Nationalism over Islam in the First World War

Before the First World War, different parts of the Arab were ruled by the Ottoman Empire. The Arab nationalists wanted to get rid of the Turkish occupation and gain independence. Therefore, there were partners of the British against the Ottoman Empire. They took into consideration the fact of Arab Nationalism in place of religious ideology. In exchange for the Arab support against the Turks, the British had a tacit agreement with one Arab Leader Sharif of Mecca, who was custodian of the holy places. An understanding was developed between them that the Arabs would declare jihad against their fellow Turk Muslims and in return independent governments would be established in various parts of the Arab. The deal was in place but still, the British declared the Balfour Declaration. The British conduct was also dubious on other fronts.

The Great Deception and the Arab's Revolt

Another string to this drama is that the British concluded two deals at the same time. One with the Sharif of Mecca to garner the Arab support against the Turks and other with the French to divide Arab states between them after the end of the war. The deal with France is known as **Sykes-Picot Agreement**. It was a secret agreement. In that agreement, it was agreed

ROLE OF ARAB STATES, THE ARAB LEAGUE AND THE OIC IN THE PALESTINE-ISRAEL DISPUTE: A COMPLETE FIASCO

that the Middle East would be divided between the Britain and France. Syria and Lebanon would go to France while Iraq would go to Britain. Under this agreement, initially, Palestine had a neutral status but later on, it was decided that it would also go to Britain. So, the British double-crossed the Arabs.

In his book, "The Arabs", Peter Mansfield, discusses this particular period and the British role in WWI, he titles that chapter "**The Great Deception**". To complete the picture, it has to be added that the promise that was made to Sharif Hussain of Mecca that free governments would be established in the Arab countries, was supposedly not for the whole of the Middle East. Some areas were excluded from this promise. However, it was unclear whether Palestine was excluded from this or not. The British employed the tactic of ambiguity in their dealings with the Arabs and the latter fell prey to it. Some things were deliberately left for the future to ensure ambiguity. So, this agreement between Sharif Hussain of Mecca and the British, i.e. between the Arabs and the British was also ambiguous.⁹

So, Peter Mansfield's judgment is that the British double-crossed the Arabs and issued a Belfour declaration. They opened the doors of Palestine to the Jews and the Jews started coming in 1930s. The Arabs rose up against their duplicity during 1936-1939. This revolt was suppressed jointly by the British and the Jews. The British allowed the Jews to organize para military, their para military. There was a Jewish group Haganah that was underground army. Resultantly, the Jews were allowed to arm themselves and to organize themselves militarily because the British did not have enough strength in Palestine to deal with the Palestinian revolt so they employed Jews as partners.¹⁰ Joint Anglo-Jewish partnership successfully suppressed the Arab revolt by 1939. That was the second western side complicity, the second charge against the West that the Arab revolt was put down by a western power.

Change in the British Attitude towards Arabs during the World War II

Then came the 1940's, the period of WWII, amazingly the British immediately adopted **pro-Arab policies**. The reason was that They needed Arab cooperation against Germany in the beginning as the latter was very strong. The Middle East was not fully defended and it was exposed to Nazi attack and Fascist attack. Therefore, the British needed Arab cooperation and so they adopted pro-Arab policies. The Jews were pro-British anyway as they had no other option then. The Jews could not go to Germany because of Hitler's anti-Semitic and anti-Jews agenda. So, the Jews were already in the British pocket but the Arabs could go to Germany.

So, in order to lure the Arabs towards their camp, the British began to appeal to the Arabs by adopting a pro-Arab policy in Palestine.

When this happened, the Jews waited for some time so the danger to the Middle East receded. Then in 1943 when there was no danger that Germans or Italians would overrun the Middle East as they had been pushed back. When this happened, the Jews began guerilla warfare against the British. The Jews began to fight because the British policy was pro-Arab and things became so difficult for the trembling British Empire to keep its hold over the region. Interestingly, by the time the British adopted a pro-Arab policy, the Jews were strong enough to counter their previous patron. The strength they had acquired under the benevolent eye of the British enabled them to safeguard their interests.¹¹

The Jews established the state of Israel under their New Patron

When the British and the Jews began to fight due to the former's pro-Arab policy and weak standing in the wake of the Second World War, it meant that the Jews had lost one patron.¹² The Jews lost their patron but got another one in the United States of America. After the demise of the US President F.D. Roosevelt in April, 1945, his successor Harry S. Truman was pro-Jewish. He was politically weak and had a great shoe to fill. Owing to his weak political base, he needed the Jewish support in terms of finance and votes. He considered the Jews historically persecuted and oppressed. His support for the creation of a Jewish state was so recognized that he was once introduced as the "Cyrus" referring to the historical role the King Cyrus played in return of the Jews in the land of Palestine.¹³ As the British were financially depended on the US after the Second World War, they succumbed to the US pressure and supported the cause of establishment of a Jewish state on May 14, 1948.¹⁴

American's Diplomatic Violence; "The United Nations' Resolution 181"

Under the United States' patronage, the matter of creation of a state for Jews was brought before the newly created United Nations in 1947. United Nations General Assembly created a large committee i.e. UN Special Committee on Palestine. The committee consisted of eleven countries. The committee decided that Palestine should be divided into three parts: nearly 55%, would be part of the Jewish state, the remaining part would be the Palestinian state and the holy places situated in Palestine would be internationally governed. As the United Nations at that time was considered a Western Club so the proposal of that committee was adopted by the United Nations through Resolution No. 181 on 29th of November, 1947.

ROLE OF ARAB STATES, THE ARAB LEAGUE AND THE OIC IN THE PALESTINE-ISRAEL DISPUTE: A COMPLETE FIASCO

It can be argued that had the same proposal been presented to the United Nations General Assembly in the 1960s when the third-world countries became the majority, it would have never been approved. It was approved in the 1940s when the United Nations was primarily dominated by the United States. The United States did arms twisting of the smaller states to secure a third majority for Resolution 181 for the creation of the state of Israel. These United States' efforts can be termed as "Diplomatic Violence". In continuation of adoption of the Resolution 181, the Jewish Agency declared the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948. The Jews called the coming to Palestine as "Aliyah" which is a Hebrew word meaning "to move up". After the declaration, the British did not bother to enforce the provisions of the UN Resolution 181. They took the position that they would simply leave Palestine without handing over power to anyone. That response of the British tantamounted to criminal negligence.¹⁵

Arab's response to their Double Humiliation

The creation of the state of Israel and the ensuing Arab-Israel War was considered a double humiliation for the Arabs. On one hand, five Arab states i.e. Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, along with local Palestinian forces were defeated by Israel in the first Arab-Israel war fought from May 1948 to July 1949 while on the other hand, Palestinians became refugees. At the time of the creation of Israel, 1.2 million Palestinians were living in the land of Palestine out of which 0.7 to 0.8 million Palestinians became refugees.¹⁶ The Palestinian cause became the showcase cause for the Arabs to the extent that if one is a good Arab one must pay at least lip service to the cause of Palestine.

Arab-Israel Wars

After declaration of the creation of state of Israel, five Arab countries along with Palestinian forces attacked Israel in 1948 with the intention to destroy Israel but their efforts went in vain. Israel came out victorious and occupied 80 % of the land of Palestine after the War whereas through the UN Resolution 181, 55 % of land was earmarked for the state of Israel. The Israelites took the stance that the Arabs left on their own accord but there is consensus on the fact that the Arabs were forced out of the land of Palestine so that the Jews from the rest of the world could be settled there. Israel is still occupying that land. That occupation was carried out with the help of the Western powers. After the end of the first Arab-Israel War, Jerusalem was divided into two parts i.e. East Jerusalem and West Jerusalem.

The former came under the control of Israel and the latter went to the Arabs. The holy places are situated in the East Jerusalem.

After the end of the first Arab-Israel War, tensions between the Arab states and Israel kept on escalating and eventually resulted into a war that lasted six days in 1967. In May 1967, Egypt expelled UN peace keeping forces out of the Sinai Desert and military movements across the border raised concerns for Israel. Thereafter on the 5th of October, 1967, Israel launched a pre-emptive air strike on Egypt, Jordan, and Syria and destroyed their respective Air Forces. The war ended on the 10th of October, 1967 after the intervention of the United Nations. The war resulted in a much greater territory under the control of Israel capturing huge areas of the Sinai Desert from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. It is interesting to note that before the Six Days War, the area of Israel was 8000 square miles but after that war Israel was occupying the area of almost 28000 square miles. After the Second Arab-Israel War, the UN adopted Resolution 242 calling upon Israel to withdraw from the occupied land of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in exchange for lasting peace in the region. That resolution laid the basis for the normalization of relations between Egypt and Israel as enshrined in the Camp David Accords signed in 1978. Resultantly, only the Sinai Desert was returned to Egypt. All other occupied territories are still under illegal occupation of Israel.¹⁷

The third Arab-Israel War, also known as “Yom Kippur War”, started on October 6, 1973, on the day of religious festival of Israel. The Israel was caught off-guard when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack. Israel suffered great losses at first but then recovered from the early blows and succeeded in containing the attack. The war came to an end on 26 October 1973, after which Israel signed peace agreements with Syria and Egypt.

These multiple losses at the hands of Israel frustrated all efforts of Arab states for the cause of Palestine. Eventually, the national interests of the Arab States took preference over the Palestine cause.

The Arab League and the Palestinian Cause

The Arab League was created in 1945 on the basis of Arab Nationalism. Apart from promoting its objective of safeguarding the interests of the Arab states, it has played significant role in advocating the cause of Palestinians and their right to self-determination. Being a regional organization, over the years, it has employed various diplomatic tactics to

ROLE OF ARAB STATES, THE ARAB LEAGUE AND THE OIC IN THE PALESTINE-ISRAEL DISPUTE: A COMPLETE FIASCO

further the cause of Palestine. When the UN proposed for partition of the land of Palestine, the Arab League vehemently opposed the idea and called for a resolution keeping in view the innate right of Palestinians to live freely in their land. After the declaration of the creation of the state of Israel, the Arab League supported the military action undertaken by a group of five Arab States during the first Arab-Israel War.¹⁸

The Arab League has always supported the cause of Palestine. It has supported the Palestinian refugees by providing shelter and monetary aid to the refugees living in the refugee camps.¹⁹ It has advocated for a separate homeland for Palestinians with East Jerusalem as its capital. It has majorly used diplomatic tactics to achieve its goals by consistently bolstering a two-state solution for the Israel-Palestine conflict so that the Palestinians and the Jews can coexist there. In addition to the diplomatic efforts, the Arab League provides financial support to the Palestinian Authority to rebuild and improve infrastructure and to strengthen its institutions.

Despite its diplomatic and economic support, the plight of Palestinians is still far from being alleviated. All the multinational organizations suffer from the limit of their enforcement mechanism and authority, the Arab League is no exception. All the resolutions and diplomatic efforts without the will and might to implement them are of no use. All these efforts equate to only lip service and serve no purpose as far as resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict is concerned.

Role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

Over the years, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has issued numerous resolutions regarding the Palestinian cause which underlines the OIC's position on various aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which includes the rights of the Palestinian people, Jerusalem's status, and justified and comprehensive solution to the conflict. It is noteworthy that geopolitical developments and ground events can evolve the contents of the resolutions. The OIC's resolutions are often aimed at supporting an independent and sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. The OIC supports the Palestinian's self-determination right. Resolutions strongly oppose Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories of West Bank and East Jerusalem. OIC considers them illegal as it hinders the peace process. The resolutions stress the special status of Jerusalem (Al-Quds) and its importance to Muslims. The OIC snubs any attempts to change the demographic or legal status of Jerusalem. Human

rights violations like arbitrary arrests, house demolitions, and movement restrictions are condemned by OIC. The OIC usually promotes a two-state solution to the conflict through negotiations based on relevant United Nations resolutions and International Law. Resolutions stress international involvement and United Nations' role in facilitating a long-term solution and implementation of related UN resolutions. OIC supports aid to Palestinian people affected by conflict, displacement, and economic challenges and backs international efforts like boycotts and sanctions to pressurize Israel for compliance of International law and end its occupation on Palestine. OIC assembles summits and special sessions in response to urgent developments related to the cause which allows member states to collectively respond and express solidarity during critical times. OIC underscores the significance of coordination with other entities like the Arab League, Non-Aligned Movement, and NGOs to impact a unified approach. The political situation and diplomatic relations in the region can impact the content and importance of these resolutions.²⁰

Recent Developments lay bare the Western Complicity in War Crimes

In the aftermath of the recent attack of HAMAS on Israeli territory, the Israeli attacks on the civilian infrastructure that has cost thousands of lives shows the world the complicity of the Western Powers primarily the United States in supporting Israel to commit war crimes. The US has historically supported Israel to strength its position in the Middle East. The security of Israel has remained the policy of the United States. The Israeli attacks killing non-combatant women and children show that the current world order has become toothless to prevent these brazen violations of the rules of war and human rights. Recently, the UN Draft Resolution calling for a humanitarian ceasefire supported by more than a hundred countries has been vetoed by the United States, the otherwise champion of human rights and torchbearer of democratic values. It has shown two things the structure of the largest organization of states, United Nations, is flawed where the will of a hundred sovereign states can be overruled by a single member with veto power. Secondly, without the force to enforce its decisions, the United Nations is unable to bring any positive change.

Conclusion

It is evident from the above discussion that the Palestinians have been devoid of their land by the Jews with the complicity of the Western Powers primarily by the British and the US. For more than seven decades they are fighting for their basic rights. Apart from the earlier

ROLE OF ARAB STATES, THE ARAB LEAGUE AND THE OIC IN THE PALESTINE-ISRAEL DISPUTE: A COMPLETE FIASCO

enthusiasm of the Arab states, more often than not, the Palestinians have been left alone at their own in the face of Israel's hostility. Since the second Arab-Israel War, the Arab states, partly due to their dependence on the Western powers and partly due to internal differences, have failed to take any substantial steps to end the misery of their Muslim brethren. Similar is the story of the efforts of the Muslim organizations i.e. the OIC and the Arab League that have proven futile. They have done nothing other than pay lip service to the Palestinian cause. It is obligatory for the Arab states in particular and the Muslim world in general to make concerted and serious efforts toward the resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

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¹² Patron is a great power that supplies support to a smaller state.

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